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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EEB JENNIFER PURL

STATE PASS USTR

USDOC FOR 4212/ITA/MAC/EUR/OECA/WNE/JLEVINE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: BELGIUM: GOVERNMENT FULLY SUPPORTS EU LINE AGAINST
UPDATED U.S. BEEF HORMONE SANCTIONS

REF: STATE 4100

¶1. Econoff met January 28 with Jana Zikmundova, Minister Counselor at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Director of Trade Policy and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to discuss Belgium's response to the January 14 modification by the USG of the list of products subject to retaliatory import duties in the WTO Beef Hormones case, and to seek Belgian support for pressing the European Commission to re-engage on a negotiated solution, per reftel points.

¶2. Zikmundova, who has been in her position since the fall of 2008, said the Belgian Government (GOB) stands behind the EU position (as expressed in the European Commission's January 15 statement taken from the EC website) that the recent U.S. action is illegal under the WTO. She added that the U.S. retaliatory action had come as a surprise, was "very unpleasant," and could have negative effects on Belgian exports. Zikmundova hoped that the new administration would reconsider its measures. Followed shortly as the beef sanctions were by the January 16 announcement that the United States was filing a case challenging EU restrictions on U.S. poultry exports, the Belgians were in "double shock," Zikmundova said, and especially so given what she described as positive meetings of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) in December 2008.

¶3. Zikmundova said EU Trade Commissioner Ashton was scheduled to travel to Washington in the second half of February to discuss this and other issues, with hopes that the new USTR will have been confirmed and briefed by then.

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